

Amendments to the Claims

Claim 1 (Currently amended): A method of facilitating the formation of agricultural contracts for the future contracting of agricultural commodities using the Internet comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a Web server connected to the Internet;
- (b) providing, in operative communication with the server, a centralized database system for the storage and retrieval of data including data related to types or amounts of an agricultural commodity;
- (c) storing data in the database system relating to types and amounts of agricultural commodities desired by one or more potential agricultural commodity buyers and establishing a defined allocation of an amount of a type of agricultural commodity according to at least one allocation parameter, wherein at least one of the at least one allocation parameter is set to reduce risk associated with future contracting of agricultural commodities;
- (d) in response to a command input into the system, displaying a listing of desired commodities including information related to the types, amounts available or deliveries committed of the commodities;
- (e) in response to input from a buyer or supplier, designating a specific contract program;
- (f) after being provided the ability to review listings on the system, receiving input data from a potential supplier for an agricultural commodity relating to a specific type and amount of a commodity which the supplier is willing to grow or supply ~~commit to growing and supplying~~ to the buyer at harvest or ~~at other times~~ after harvest;
- (g) comparing the input data from the supplier with current data from the buyer, including desired type, amount available, and the at least one allocation parameter;
- (h) if the input data from a supplier exceeds the amount of an allocation parameter for the supplier, requiring resubmission of at least some input data from the supplier for the supplier to continue;

for a specific type and amount of the commodity to be grown or provided by the supplier for the buyer for review and consideration by buyer and supplier; and

(j) dynamically and in substantially real time automatically decrementing the current amount available for contracting each time a pending contract is issued.

Claim 2 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein information inputted into the system is inputted via a Web browser.

Claim 3 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein information inputted into the system is inputted via an applet in Java or another program language.

Claim 4 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the agricultural commodities are comprised of agricultural products.

Claim 5 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the agricultural commodities are comprised of commodity grains or oilseeds.

Claim 6 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the agricultural commodities are comprised of fruits or vegetables.

Claim 7 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the agricultural commodities are comprised of animals or fish.

Claim 8 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the agricultural commodities are comprised of horticultural products or ornamental plants.

Claim 9 (Original): The method of claim 4 wherein the step of storing data in the database system relating to types and amounts of agricultural commodities further comprises the steps of: storing data identifying a quantity of agricultural products desired by the buyer; and storing data related to a desired allocation of the quantity of agricultural products among a plurality of areas.

Claim 10 (Original): The method of claim 4 wherein the step of displaying a listing of desired commodities further comprises the steps of: displaying a listing of desired agricultural products available in desired areas; and updating the listing to reflect a change in data as a result of contracting between the supplier and the buyer.

Claim 11 (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein the contract generated is a paper contract.

Claim 12 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1 wherein the contract generated is an electronic contract with stages of review and approval by both parties after input is validated by the system and is executable using digital signatures.

Claim 13 (Currently amended): A method of facilitating and tracking the formation of agricultural contracts for the future contracting of agricultural crops using a wide area distributed network comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a centralized database system for the storage and retrieval of data;
- (b) storing data related to the number of acres or bushels of agricultural crops desired by one or more agricultural commodity buyers and establishing a desired allocation of an amount of a type of agricultural product available to a user of the system grower according to at least one allocation parameter, wherein the at least one allocation parameter is set to reduce risk associated with future contracting of agricultural commodities;
- (c) storing data related to the number of acres or bushels of the agricultural crops committed for the production of the crops by one or more growers;
- (d) displaying a listing of the desired crops including information related to the number of acres or bushels desired and the number of acres or bushels already committed;
- (e) receiving input data from a grower relating to a specific amount of the crop which the grower is willing to commit to the desired agricultural crop, comparing the input data

from the grower with current data from a buyer regarding type, amount, and allocation parameter, and

(1) if input data exceeds amount of an allocation parameter for the grower, requiring resubmission of at least some input data from the grower for the grower to continue;

(2) if input data does not exceed amount for the allocation parameter, generating a ~~pending-proposed~~ agricultural production contract for a specific type and amount of the crop to be produced by the grower for the buyer for review and consideration by buyer and grower;

(f) if a ~~pending-proposed~~ contract is issued by agreement of the buyer and grower, updating the data in the database to reflect the additional acres committed by the grower as indicated in the input data so that the listing of the desired crops can be displayed in real time showing the allocation of acres or bushels committed to the desired crop.

Claim 14 (Previously presented): The method of claim 13 further comprising electronically managing delivery times and methods by buyer input and inclusion into a contract.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 13 further comprising electronically managing quality data for growing or delivered products by buyer input and inclusion into a contract.

Claim 16 (Previously presented): The method of claim 13 wherein a material term of the contract includes pricing, further comprising electronically pricing the contract based on a variable.

Claim 17 (Original): The method of claim 16 wherein the variable is selected from the set comprising time of delivery and a quality measure.

Claim 18 (Original): The method of claim 13 wherein the centralized database system is installed on an Internet Web server, and users of the database system access the database system via an Internet Web browser.

Claim 19 (Original): The method of claim 18 wherein the centralized database system is installed on an Internet Web server, and users of the database system access data using Java or another applet.

Claim 20 (Original): The method of claim 13 wherein the agricultural crops further comprise agricultural products.

Claim 21 (Previously presented): The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of allocating among a plurality of elevators the stored data relating to the number of acres of agricultural crops desired.

Claim 22 (Previously presented): The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of allocating by distinct geographic regions the data related to the number of acres of the agricultural crops desired.

Claim 23 (Original): The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of allocating the data according to one of the following:
product type, time of delivery, method of delivery, end-user buyer.

Claim 24 (Cancelled)

Claim 25 (Currently amended): An apparatus for the formation of agricultural contracts for the future contracting of agricultural commodities over a wide area distributed network comprising:

- (a) an application/web server;
- (b) a database server;
- (c) a communications link between the application/web server and the database server and the wide area distributed network;
- (d) one or more remote user terminals;
- (e) software on a computer storage medium which facilitates:

- (f) storing data in the database system relating to types and amounts of agricultural commodities desired by one or more agricultural commodity buyers and establishing a desired allocation of a amount of a type of agricultural commodity available to a user of the apparatus according to at least one allocation parameter, wherein at least one of the at least one allocation parameter reduces agricultural associated risks of the one or more agricultural commodity buyers;
- (g) in response to a command input into the system, displaying a listing of desired commodities including information related to the types, amounts or deliveries of the commodities;
- (h) receiving input data from a supplier of an agricultural commodity relating to a specific type and amount of a commodity which the supplier is willing to supply to the buyer at harvest or at other times;
- (i) comparing the input data from the supplier with current data from the buyer, including type, amount, and allocation parameter;
- (j) if input data exceeds amount of an allocation parameter for the supplier, requiring resubmission of at least some input data from the supplier for the supplier to continue;
- (k) if input data does not exceed the amount of the allocation parameter, generating a pending-proposed contract for the sale of the specific type and amount of the commodity to be produced by the supplier for the buyer for review and consideration by buyer and supplier; and
- (l) dynamically and in substantially real time automatically decrementing the current quantity available for contracting each time a pending contract is issued.

Claim 26 (Currently amended): A system for the formation of agricultural contracts for the future contracting of agricultural commodities over a wide area distributed network comprising:

- (a) a central computer system in operative communication with a wide area distributed network;
- (b) a plurality of widely distributed seller computers in operative communication with the wide area distributed network;
- (c) a plurality of widely distributed buyer computers in operative communication with the wide area distributed network;

(d) a database stored on said central computer system containing data related to specific type and amount of a commodity which the seller is willing to supply ~~commit to supplying~~ to the buyer at harvest or ~~at other times after harvest~~, and types and amounts of agricultural commodities desired by one or more agricultural commodity buyers, and establishing a desired allocation of a quantity of a type of agricultural product available to a user of the system according to at least one allocation parameter, wherein the at least one allocation parameter is set to reduce agricultural associated risks of the one or more agricultural commodity buyers contracting for an agricultural commodity to be grown and delivered;

(e) so that, in response to a command input into the system, buyers and sellers can form contracts related to the types, amounts or deliveries of the commodities by:

(1) the central computer comparing input data from a seller with current data from the buyer related to type, quantity, and allocation parameter;

(2) if the input data ~~exceeds~~ exceeds quantity of an allocation parameter, requiring resubmission of at least some input data from the seller for the seller to continue;

(3) if input data does not exceed the quantity of the allocation parameter, generating a pending-proposed agricultural production contract for review and consideration by buyer and seller;

(f) dynamically and in substantially real time automatically decrementing the current quantity available for contracting each time a pending-proposed contract is issued.

Claim 27 (Original): The system of claim 26 further comprising a software security component to restrict access to the system.

Claim 28 (Original): The system of claim 27 wherein the software security component comprises varying levels of access to data by authorized users of the system.

Claim 29 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1 further comprising converting a pending contract to a binding contract upon acceptance of a buyer and a supplier.

Claim 30 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1 wherein the allocation can change from time to time.

Claim 31 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1 wherein the integrity of data in the database system in which data is entered using an Internet Web browser comprises the steps of: providing a control script which uses a limited amount of state data stored by the Internet browser during the execution of a task, the state data stored by the browser identifying a subset of master state data stored in the database system; entering the state data stored by the browser into the database system to update the subset of the master state data upon the completion of the task; and preventing the state data stored by the browser to be entered into the database system and updating the subset of the master data when the task is aborted by the user.

Claim 32 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of requiring a supplier to reenter input data that does not qualify as to quantity and allocation parameter.

Claim 33 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising automatically decrementing the database upon formation of a contract.

Claim 34 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1 further comprising providing security levels to the system.

Claim 35 (Previously presented): The method of claim 34 wherein the security comprises varying levels of access to data by authorized users of the system.

Claim 36 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of buyers and a plurality of suppliers.

Claim 37 (Previously presented): The method of claim 1 further comprising generating a message for a buyer or supplier relative to an allocation parameter.

Claim 38 (New): The method of claim 1 wherein the allocation parameter is a geographic region in which the allocation of the agricultural product is grown.

Claim 39 (New): The method of claim 1 wherein the allocation parameter is based on delivery time factors.